As a passionate pilgrim in search of life, art, and culture, Henry James left his native America for Europe. His was but a lover's quarrel with America, and his sensibility and the entire direction of his creative energy were deeply rooted in the American Imagination, it is not therefore surprising that one should discover in Henry James's fiction the same archetypal elements and patterns of the creative impulse as He embedded in the works of the other classical American writers. The American writers before Henry James had all concerned themselves with the problem of human identtty and were all united in the presentation of the drama of identity, as a quest for selfhood. Whitman and Melville were, before James, the major exponents of this concern, and each in an opposite fulfilment of the creative vision affirmed the characteristic quality of the American Matter. Walt Whitman, in his *Leaves of Grass,* continuously probed reality at the axes of the Self and the Cosmos, and articulated the double-genesis of the American selfhood. In *Song of Myself.* Whitman projected his own self identifying it with the democratic average of American humanity as the critical focus absorbing the inrushing currents of the universe, and letting the whole of life order itself in the rich cumulative enjambments of its impressions of events, its images of experience, its symbols of signifinance, into the welcoming fertility of the subjective centre of poetic perception. As the ego-hero progresses in revitalizing his inner experience, he is lifted into a higher dimension of consciousness and, at this point of his spiritual take-off, the self is posited in the seif-extending continuum of the cosmos. The centripetal force of the Poet's inclusive sensibility becomes transformed into a centrifugal force of a circumambient awareness. In its elegiac affirmations of the objective, impersonal transfiguration of human selfhood, the later work of Whitman, represented by *A Passage to India* When Lilacs last in the Dooryard Bioom'd,* and *The Prayer of Columbus,* brings the two arcs of human

identity into a comprehensive vision of the unity of the self with th» universe.

If Whitman as a Transcendentalist poet revealed the drama of the American self in rapture, in ecstasy, and in the joy of faith, Melville revealed it in its metaphysical paradoxes and ironic ambiguities. Melville's *Moby Dick* also deals with the problem of the American self, and also, like the *Leaves of Grass,* projects a dialectical design combining into 3 unified symbolic structure the centtipetal and the centrifugal forces of selfhood. Captain Ahab is